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Ex-defector said to accuse U.S. of spy recruiting

Moscow (Reuter)—A Soviet ballet dancer who defected to the United States and then returned home was quoted by the Soviet press yesterday as saying U.S. intelligence agents tried to enlist him as a spy.

Yuri Stepanov, 32, formerly a member of the Moscow Classical Ballet, said agents posing as members of an international church group asked him questions about tanks and rockets once they learned he had served in the Soviet Army.

When they realized he possessed no secrets, American intelligence decided to use him as a pawn in "the campaign of anti-Soviet hysteria," the government newspaper *Izvestia* said.

Mr. Stepanov sought asylum in the United States in January when the ballet was touring Italy. But after joining the New Jersey Ballet, he asked Soviet authorities to allow him to return home.

After U.S. officials interviewed him in the presence of Soviet representatives, he returned to Moscow April 1.

According to *Izvestia*, Mr. Stepanov said he had defected not for political reasons but because he felt his dancing talent was unjustly underrated at home.

Izvestia quoted Mr. Stepanov as saying that one night in Italy he got drunk and took a train to Rome, where he asked for asylum at the U.S. Embassy.

Mr. Stepanov drew a picture of a wretched life for Soviet exiles in the United States, citing a trumpeter named as V. Chizhlik who had been unable to find work and found solace in drink.

Finally, homesickness became too great, Mr. Stepanov was quoted as saying, and he went to the Soviet consulate at the United Nations.

He alleged that U.S. State Department officials attempted to intimidate him into staying by suggesting that his wife would reject him and his child would no longer recognize him.

"I hoped that the motherland would forgive me. I was not mistaken," he was quoted as saying.